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Patentamt

Generaldirektion 2

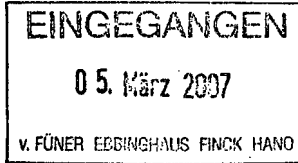
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Application No. 04 026 847.6 - 2303	Ref. EPAD-86347.8	Date 02.03.2007
Applicant Worthington Armstrong Venture		

**Communication pursuant to Article 96(2) EPC**

The examination of the above-identified application has revealed that it does not meet the requirements of the European Patent Convention for the reasons enclosed herewith. If the deficiencies indicated are not rectified the application may be refused pursuant to Article 97(1) EPC.

You are invited to file your observations and insofar as the deficiencies are such as to be rectifiable, to correct the indicated deficiencies within a period

**of 4 months**

from the notification of this communication, this period being computed in accordance with Rules 78(2) and 83(2) and (4) EPC.

One set of amendments to the description, claims and drawings is to be filed within the said period on separate sheets (Rule 36(1) EPC).

**Failure to comply with this invitation in due time will result in the application being deemed to be withdrawn (Article 96(3) EPC).**



Stern, Claudio  
Primary Examiner  
for the Examining Division

Enclosure(s): 3 page/s reasons (Form 2906)



The examination is being carried out on the **following application documents:**

<b>Description, Pages</b>	2, 6, 7, 9 1, 3-5, 8, 10-12	as originally filed received on 30.11.2006 with letter of 30.11.2006
<b>Claims, Numbers</b>	1-4	received on 30.11.2006 with letter of 30.11.2006
<b>Drawings, Sheets</b>	1-4	as originally filed

1. The following documents are referred to in this communication:

D1: US-A-5 839 246

D2: US-A-4 317 641

2. Clarity (Article 84 EPC):

- 2.1 According to the wording of claim 1, the invention consists in that "the locking latch pivots from the base in an arc".
- 2.2 This wording is however understood by the Examining Division as meaning that a pivoting movement from a departing position of the latch in the plane of the connector to its deployed position is made by the locking latch along an arc around the pivot point 51.
- 2.3 Apart from the fact that this interpretation implies a method step, whereby the category of the claim is unclear, the same situation also happens when "pivoting" the ear 50 disclosed in document D1 from a departing position to a deployed position as shown i.e. in figure 8 in this document, which therefore also describes an "arc". Thus, document D1 (as well as D2) would still take away the novelty of claim 1.
- 2.4 However, and considering the description on file, it is clear that what is being meant is that, in contrast to the ear disclosed in D1 (or D2), which has a straight form, the latch



of the connector being claimed has a curved portion **and** a straight portion.

2.5 It is therefore suggested to reword the characterizing portion of claim 1 along the lines of the following (see the originally filed description on page 8, three first lines of the last paragraph):

"characterized in that the locking latch (40) is formed from the base (41) of the connector (21, 22) with a curved portion before extending in straight lever fashion."

2.6 This combination of features does not seem to be known from, nor rendered obvious by, the available prior art.

2.7 However, in order to avoid further clarity problems taking into account that the cross beams do not form part of the invention, the preamble of claim 1 should be drafted in the following way (changes in bold or strike-out mode):

A locking connector (21, 22) for a suspended ceiling grid comprising a main beam (20) and cross beams (26, 27),

- wherein the locking connector (21) is designed to be stabbed through a slot (23) in the main beam (20) to lock with an opposing identical locking connector (22) already in the slot (23) and has a cantilevered locking latch (40) being integral with and pivoted from a base (41) in the locking connector (21),  
and

- wherein, when the locking connector (21, 22) is stabbed through the slot (23) in the main beam (20), the locking latch (40) is **can be** forced by a side of the slot (23) to flex toward the base (41) to permit the locking latch (40) to pass through the slot (23), and when the locking connector (21, 22) has been stabbed through the slot (23), the locking latch (40) **flexes can flex** back to its relaxed position wherein it is pivoted away from the base (41).

2.8 It is also noted that the reference sign 43 does not seem to appear in the figures and should therefore be deleted from the description, unless it can be shown that it unambiguously corresponds to a given element disclosed in the figures (see Rule 32(2)(i) EPC).

2.9 Dependent claims 2 to 4 would also seem to be allowable with a revised independent



claim as indicated herein above.

3. In order to expedite the procedure and to facilitate the examination of the conformity of the amended application with the requirements of Article 123(2) EPC, the applicant is requested to clearly identify all amendments carried out, other than the ones suggested by the Examining Division, irrespective of whether they concern amendments by addition, replacement or deletion, and to indicate on which passages of the original application each of these amendments are based (EPO-Guidelines E-II, 1).